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"Oh, well, that's all interpreted well enough, as far as it goes, Jim," I says; "but what does these things stand for?"

If Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is not the most frequently illustrated novel in history, it is close to it. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* entered the world during a golden age of illustration, a time when sales of novels depended on the quality and quantity of their illustrations. Since that time, Twain's novel has been reborn in some eight hundred editions, many of which are illustrated. While in some of these editions the artwork consists of no more than a token drawing or two, there are many that contain enough serious, thoughtfully executed illustrations to allow the artist to make a statement about his reading of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Among the most notable of these artistic statements are those of Edward Windsor Kemble, the first illustrator of the novel, and Barry Moser, illustrator of a centennial edition. While the work of Kemble and Moser is strikingly different, comparison of their work on *Huckleberry Finn* leads to insights into how the various elements of illustration affect the look of the final product, as well as how illustration is used to suggest certain readings of a novel.

Nearly every illustrated edition of *Huckleberry Finn* refers back to the work of E. W. Kemble, either through its adherence to Kemble's standards or through its conscious departure from them. That Kemble's illustrations have been influential has been testified to by many commentators. Michael Patrick Hearn, creator of *The Annotated Huckleberry Finn*, contends:

Kemble's designs now are as much a part of *Huckleberry Finn* as John Tenniel's wood engravings are of *Alice in Wonderland* And Huck Finn himself is remembered as much for Kemble's image of the good-hearted boy as for Twain's description.

Illustrator Warren Chappell agrees with at least part of Hearn's generous assessment of Kemble, saying, "E. W. Kemble... did as much as any artist in establishing Twain's boys, pictorially." And Thomas Hart Benton wrote in the introduction to his own illustrated edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that "the Kemble edition has remained the definitive *Huckleberry Finn*." Even Kemble's harshest critic, Mark Twain, managed to describe at least some of Kemble's illustrations for *Huckleberry Finn* as "most rattling good."

Much of the success of the Kemble illustrations in the first American edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is attributable to the intimacy between illustration and text that results from a well-designed book. In part, the book's designers achieved intimacy by placing an illustration at the head of every chapter, usually intertwining each such illustration with the opening words of the chapter. In many chapters the first letter or word of the chapter is rendered as a hand-drawn part of

the letterpress, and in some chapters the rustic chapter titles are cozily intertwined in the chapter-head illustrations.

The intimacy between text and illustration is further enhanced by the format of the first American edition, which is large enough to allow text to be run alongside the often borderless mid-chapter illustrations, making the illustrations look like inseparable parts of the printed text. The effectiveness of the original design can be seen by comparing the first American edition with the many later, less visually appealing Harper editions, which use the Kemble illustrations from the first edition but present them as plates or move them from their original positions in the text. These alterations destroy the illustrations' intimate connection to the text, resulting in illustrations that look more imposed and cartoonish than they do in the original edition.

Another revealing comparison can be made between the first American edition and the first British edition. The first British edition has a smaller format than the American edition, thus limiting the running of text alongside mid-chapter illustration. Squeezed between horizontal blocks of text, the illustrations look stranded and weak. The British edition's smaller format also breaks up most of the facing-page illustrations found in the first American edition. For example, in the first American edition an illustration showing Huck standing over a kneeling Jim faces an illustration showing Huck making himself small before a stern Judge Thatcher. Facing each other, these illustrations make a telling comment on Huck's relations to black adults versus his relationship to white adults; with the illustrations separated, as they are in the British edition, this comment is lost.

It must be recognized, too, that the intimacy of the illustrations in the first American edition is also a result of sheer numbers. With 174 illustrations, almost every illustration in the first American edition is located on the same page as the scene it depicts instead of being relocated to some more convenient, but distant, spot. When it comes to sheer numbers, the forty-nine illustrations included in Moser's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (California) cannot hope to match the 174 in Kemble's.

Though the number of illustrations in Moser's version seems small in comparison to Kemble's, it is typical of post-Kemble editions of *Huckleberry Finn* illustrated by important artists. Norman Rockwell created eight full-color plates and a little more than one small black-and-white drawing for each of the novel's forty-three chapters, while Thomas Hart Benton produced a vignette at the head of each chapter and an additional forty-five full-page illustrations. Worth Brehm, though his illustrations are excellent, was limited to eight black-and-white plates and a color frontispiece. Besides benefiting from the intimacy provided by the first American edition's design, the Kemble illustrations succeed because they are appropriate to the novel's narrative presence. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* requires readers to suspend disbelief, to accept that they are reading the written words of a semiliterate youth—even though the text in front of them is sophisticated enough to record subtle

variations in dialect and polished enough to contain brilliant descriptions of people and locations. Kemble's illustrations are appropriate to such a text because they are simple enough to seem as if they, too, might be the product of the novel's naive narrator; at the same time, however, the illustrations are sophisticated enough to depict a wide range of characters, emotions, and actions. Twain himself may not have appreciated the good match between his text and Kemble's sketch-book style, as he complained that he didn't like the drawings until the artist began to "come down to careful, painstaking work." And later, when considering an illustrator for *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Twain wrote,

This time I want pictures, not black-board outlines and charcoal sketches. If [the] Kemble illustrations for my last book were handed me today, I could understand how tiresome to me that sameness would get to be, when distributed through a whole book, and I would put them promptly in the fire.

Perhaps the best argument against Twain's harsh judgment of Kemble's "black-board sketches" is the failure of the four more sophisticated pen-and-wash illustrations Kemble executed for Harper's 1899 Autograph Edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The polished details of these later illustrations make Huck much too pretty and rob the King of all grumpiness, turning him into the apple-checked Santa Claus figure that Norman Rockwell would copy. The 1899 illustrations' added depth of detail also makes Kemble's caricatures of blacks—as exemplified by the illustration of Aunt Sally's hideously grinning cook—seem even more racist than in the sketchier original illustrations. It would be impossible to imagine 174 of the 1899 illustrations "distributed through a whole book." They would swamp the text as surely as a riverboat's wake would swamp a raft.

Besides emphasizing an appearance of simplicity, Kemble also emphasized narrative illustrations; and in choosing which moments from the novel to narrate, Kemble chose well. Many of his choices became standards that would be drawn again and again by later illustrators. The scene of Huck discovering Pap at the Widow's house was first illustrated by Kemble and has appeared in almost every succeeding illustrated edition of the novel. Similarly, the scenes of the Duke and the King in flight, and of their later tarring and feathering, were first illustrated by Kemble and then frequently redepicted by later illustrators.

Some scenes from the novel have been depicted so often as to have become clichés, which perhaps explains why artists like Moser have given up trying to pump freshness into these moments and have moved away from producing straight narrative illustration. Many of Moser's illustrations are nonnarrative portraits which resemble period photographs. Some of these portraits have round frames, like daguerreotypes, and the depicted characters' eyes are often blanked out as if the subjects had blinked during a long camera exposure. Moser's nonportrait illustrations edge toward the narrative, but instead of literally depicting the action of the novel, these illustrations are snapshots of objects and settings. Moser shows a frightening steamboat shooting sparks into the night sky but doesn't actually depict

it running down Huck and Jim's raft; he shows Peter Wilks's grave back-lit by lightning but doesn't show the eager, angry crowd gathered for the exhumation. The effect is quite different from the mostly narrative standard set down by Kemble and taken up by the majority of illustrators who followed him. Highly atmospheric, Moser's illustrations give the reader the feeling of flipping through an antique photograph album rather than of being led through the story in a narrative sense.

Despite the atmospheric appeal of Moser's illustrations, there is something to be said for the use of narrative illustrations in a literary form as dependent on plot as the nineteenth-century novel. Some moments from *Huckleberry Finn* almost demand to be narratively illustrated. The scene of Huck and Pap at the Widow's is such a moment: there is tremendous drama as Huck confronts the wicked father who has been hunkering in the darkened room, waiting for the unsuspecting boy, and few illustrators of the novel have failed to recognize the scene's potential for depicting a primal conflict between father and son. The moment is also attractive because it is Huck's first direct contact with evil and so allows the artist to set the terms by which the dark side of the novel will be approached. Artists who wish to give full play to the novel's humor can tone down Pap's appearance. Kemble, whose emphasis is basically comic, draws Pap to look more "no 'count" than evil, and in the moment of discovery Huck is shown with his hands on his hips, striking a defiant pose to his scruffy father. Rockwell also downplays Pap's malevolence, hiding the brutal father's features behind a comically wild beard. Following a darker path, Worth Brehm, the second American artist to illustrate the novel, shows Pap from Huck's point of view—a glowering head that "cussed me for putting on frills and trying to be better than him." Thomas Hart Benton's Pap is a mean, sharp-faced hillbilly, radiating ignorance and hate. Darkest of all is Moser's depiction of Pap as a disfigured, scar-faced monster. It is hard to imagine the next illustrator of the novel depicting Pap more negatively than Moser, even though illustrators have tended to make Pap increasingly hideous over the years.

The vileness of Moser's Pap raises the issue of whether illustrations for *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should have a comic or a serious emphasis. Kemble's illustrations are overwhelmingly comic. He was a cartoonist, after all, and was hired largely because Twain had been amused by a Kemble cartoon on the possible uses of electricity. Ironically, one of Kemble's suggested uses was to electrify one's doormat in order to fend off subscription book salesmen. While few of Kemble's illustrations for the novel are serious, and none are truly dark, most of Moser's illustrations are both. Not only is Moser's Pap a monster, but almost every character is drawn to look mean or ugly. Scars, missing teeth, and warts abound. Even Mary Jane Wilks—who is good, young, and pretty in the novel—is made to look ugly. And her younger sisters fare much worse. Moser also gives a smug, selfish face to the Widow Douglas, the loving Christian foil to Miss Watson's stern, self-serving Puritanism. If Moser's vision of the bulk of the novel's characters is not spelled out in his portraits, the illustrations entitled "Huck's Surrogate," depicting a pig with its throat cut, and "Miss Sophia's Testament," depicting pigs in church, make his vision quite clear.

The great exception Moser makes is in his illustrations of Jim, who appears nearly Olympian in his beauty and dignity, especially in comparison to Moser's cast of hideous white characters. Just as Moser's dark vision of the novel is part of the hundred year progression toward more serious readings of the novel, so too is his ennobling of Jim part of a long progression away from Kemble's Jim Crow art. Though only a few of Kemble's illustrations of Jim are blatant, rolling-eyed-darky exaggerations, there is much subtle racism in Kemble's portrayal of Jim, as shown in the illustrations depicting Jim taking submissive positions to whites. Despite Kemble's racism, however, a few of his drawings manage to make Jim look noble, such as the illustration of Jim asleep at the steering oar and the illustration showing Jim heroically insisting on a doctor for the wounded Tom Sawyer, a boy whose game-playing has caused Jim raftloads of trouble.

Besides presenting a super-heroic view of Jim, Moser's illustrations also differ from Kemble's in their explicitness. Moser shows Pap in gruesome death, naked and shot in the back, and he shows the King naked as he dances "The King's Camelopard." Among the post-Kemble illustrators of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Moser is not alone in depicting nudity—Benson drew bare-breasted witches, and many illustrators have shown, discreetly, a naked, dancing King—but Moser's depiction of nudity is distinctly explicit. This freedom to be explicit was not granted to Kemble, an artist confined by the moral standards of his day. For example, Twain rejected a Kemble illustration of the King kissing a young girl at the camp meeting with the comment:

It is powerful good, but it mustn't go in — don't forget it. Let's not make any pictures of the campmeeting. The subject won't bear illustrating. It is a disgusting thing, & pictures are sure to tell the truth about it too plainly.

The shock some readers feel upon seeing Moser's illustrations underscores something that Twain himself understood when he censored Kemble's depiction of the camp meeting. In censoring Kemble, Twain recognized that text can get away with more than illustrations. This is a tribute to the immediacy of illustration as well as an acknowledgment of the power of illustration to shape a reader's interpretation of a novel even before the reader has cast an eye on the first word of the text. As with any power, illustration is a power to be used, and Twain certainly used illustration both to sell copies of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and to present an immediately accessible image of his novel as a bit of good, clean fun spiced with a few moments of danger and sentiment. It takes a more-than-casual reading to discover the disturbing side of *Huckleberry Finn* that lurks below the surface visual image, and one suspects Twain knew that it was the casual reader who was most likely to be influenced by illustration—as well as most likely to censor *Huckleberry Finn* with a battle axe if the illustrations sent the wrong message. That Twain knew he could get into more trouble over a picture than a phrase is clear from the pains which he and his publisher, Charles L. Webster, took to stamp out all traces of the infamous obscene plate that held up production of the first American edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The later producers of illustrated editions of *Huckleberry Finn* are doing nothing new in using illustrations for purposes economic and political. There is really nothing surprising in the fact that illustration is still used to sell Twain's novel as something it may not entirely be: a children's book; a plea for total racial equality; a knee-slapping comedy; or a journey to the depths of the psyche. What is surprising is that new illustrated editions of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* continue to appear to this day, some seventy years after the golden age of illustrated fiction. Why, in an era when readers neither expect nor demand illustration with their fiction, is Twain's book still being illustrated by first-rate artists such as Barry Moser? It may be because *Huckleberry Finn* still carries the cachet of a children's book, and children's books are frequently illustrated. It may be because readers of this very nostalgic novel feel comfortable being immersed in the nostalgic experience of reading an illustrated novel. Or it may be a reflection of the general conservatism of the book arts: since the first edition was illustrated, then later editions should be illustrated as well. Perhaps it is the result of all three of these circumstances. Whatever the causes, it seems likely the tradition of illustrating *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will continue. While it is hard to imagine the year 2084 giving birth to an illustrated edition of *Catch-22* or *The Handmaid's Tale* or any other novel that was not originally part of the illustrated-novel tradition, an illustrated bicentennial edition of *Huckleberry Finn* seems a sure bet. It is almost certain that an illustrator not yet born will put a hand to the task of artistically interpreting the novel once again; will set out to shape the characters, setting, and spirit of the novel for a generation still capable of appreciating, through words and pictures, the humor and humanity of Mark Twain's, and maybe this nation's, greatest novel.

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